Marathon grows along with Mumbai’s FITNESS

Shreya Bhandary | stu

You need to be a runner to know how grueling and demanding training it takes to get to the finish line. And over the past eighteen years, running has been taken seriously by many in the city, thanks to the Mumbai Marathon. Today’s Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon 2012, the ninth edition of the event, in which The Times of India is the print partner, is another milestone in Mumbai’s run with international competition.

Running the Mumbai marathon might mean various things to different people, but for a major chunk of Mumbai’s city, it’s a way of staying fit and healthy.

Last year, Harpreet Singh, 24, was one of those standing outside the race track cheering on participants. This year, he chose to take the challenge himself. “I’ve never had an athletic or fitness background, nor was I inclined towards it. But after I attended the marathon last year, I realized that men and women of the age of my grandparents were fitter than me. So I decided to change,” said Singh, who has since become religiously practising and is all set to run the marathon today. “My body is fit and feels much healthier now, so I might keep participating in the event every year,” added the second-year MBA student of Jamnabai Narsee Institute of Management Studies.

The marathon has also made many Mumbaiites more aware of fitness. “Even though they may not choose to run, fitness instructors across the city have noticed an upsurge in the number of people aiming to lose weight and stay fit,” said a trainer who helps a runner work out.

“The marathon is paid on a great level and carries a lot of weight. But it is not the kind of event that one can get through by practising once a week,” said Sameer Parikh, a fitness expert. He is currently training a group of runners aiming to participate in Sunday’s half-marathon, with the added bonus of an equal number of people who have started exercising regularly to stay fit. “It’s a great way to get in shape,” said Singh.

For 46-year-old Malavendra Mehta, it’s his fifth Mumbai marathon, but his reason for running this year holds a lot of importance. “I was always sure that I was healthy and fit, until recently when I heard about a friend who suffered a stroke at the age of 38. That’s when I decided to take my health seriously,” said Chirag Mehta, 36, who has been going for regular walks and runs at the Sanjay Gandhi National Park with his father for the past year.

Reo Gupta, 36, took up the challenge of running a half marathon for the same reason. “For the initial month, I started walking 30 km a week and then just started on running. Now I’m sure that I will finish the event,” said Gupta.

Many fitness experts believe that the marathon has changed people’s perceptions. “People are no longer looking at just preparing for the run but looking forward to maintaining their fitness even after the run,” said John Glover, a fitness expert.

AT THE STARTING LINE

Full Marathon
42.195 km
Starts 5:40 am

Half Marathon
21.097 km
Starts 7:45 am

Senior Citizens’ Run
4.3 km
Starts 6 am at SCR Main Gate

Dream Run
6 km
Starts 9 am

MORNING WALKER MEETS PRO RUNNERS: Athletes do work-outs at Marine Drive